

Proverbias

AN OFFERING OF COCONUTS
FROM THE LAND OF FOG



VIJAY FAFAT

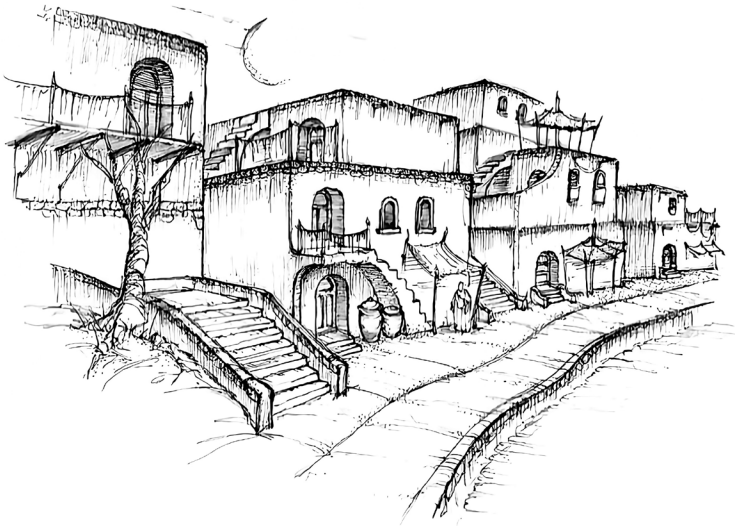
Prôverbia

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WALKING STICK PUBLICATION



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*Cheap are the words of the mystic;
or profound, maybe...*



Foreword

Proverbia is a distant island, a waving thought, a Nantucket which no one has visited except in the wistful imagination of folk wisdom and creative lore. It is a land behind the veil which falls before our commercial eyes; eyes which are locked in navigating life as we know it and know no better. In moments of perspicuity, the curtaining waterfall parts a little and lets a ray of wit, a mote of *bon mot* float out for us to feel wise and clever. These are the linguistic sprays of sparkling phrases which tell us that speech, like life, should not be linear; that there is more to words than syntax and spelling. Is there not a chuckle at the visual when one hears,

“The molasses of bureaucrats brims with moles and asses.” ?

Or a yearning ache to think that:

*“All one needs is a house of clay,
a pot of water, and a smiling door.”* ?

Proverbia is the provenance of all manner of deep and pithy thoughts which occur in our minds and cross our ears within a welter of chaos and noise, much of which is complex communication and some of which is time-filling nonsense. These are the patterns of words which give us the “aha!” moments about language itself when understood in a flash, when deployed at will at the exact right moments. They are tersely-packaged drops of wisdom which mean far more than they say. We try to classify them with various fancy names – proverbs, idioms, shibboleths, *paraprosdokians*... That, in itself, is a pleasurable activity, telling us something about our own sensibilities and the structure of our humor. But ultimately, their comeliness comes not from analysis but a softly visceral verbal punch.

As all geographies, *Proverbias* has had its share of great artists, thinkers, writers, architects, builders, and dreamers. It has had its quota of conjurers, conmen, saints, charlatans, and philosophers. Sancho Panza fit here right alongside Sun Tzu and Saint Tukaram. Buddha had laughed with Chaplin in its village square. The dove-pacifism of Gandhi had conversed uneasily with the red sword of Genghis Khan on the banks of Sabarmati river. And the common man... oh, the common man... if he had anything memorable to say to express the anguish and grime and minor fancies of daily life, he might as well have been speaking in *Proverbias*...

Proverbias ranges over the jungles of Kipling, the dusty by-lanes of *Malgudi*, the magnificently lofty, snow-capped *Blue Moon* mountain of *Shangri-La*, and the depths of Nemo's *Nautilus*. The soul of Tang poetry lives here, as do the stirrings of humanity in Kabir's *doha*'s and the numbing artistry of the woven tapestries of Borges. The river *Saraswati*, that bearer of learned words and gurgling admonitions, winds its way outside the suburbs of *Proverbias*. Waters of many different languages flow down from *Mount Proverbion* to mingle and mix with the silt of *Saraswati*. As guiding, caring hands, the rocky outgrowths give her waters frequent turns of a good phrase. And the river... she flows on and outward to the distant horizon, to merge itself in the sea of humanity... to let philosophical people and dreamers fish in her depths for unusual thoughts.

One might expect that such an idyll of a land would be Utopian, free of anguish, jealousy and strife loosed upon the ordinary land by an uncaring free will. *That*, my friends, would be a mistake of thought, for man is never divorced from his base nature and elemental desires. As a cynical lout with a mouth in *Proverbias* will tell you, a loin cloth in an emporium does not a necktie become. A human anywhere

remains a moving bullock cart loaded up with hay-stacks of emotions - prickly, dry, expectant, and capable of both, fiery bursts *and* protective thatching. Without those ingredients, the proverbial argot would be sterile, no doubt. Language must always be pregnant with the verbiage of emotions. And “*the arrow must fly crooked in man’s world.*”...

Proverbial’s history and mythology engulf the distant times of Sumeria, Mesopotamia, Inca, Mongolia, the pre-Vedic India, the Biblical *Book of Proverbs*, ranging over Confucianism, Islamic philosophy, and the Olympian Greeks. Someday, we shall dive into the tales hidden in “*The Book of Metaphorical Lives*” which adorns the library of *Proverbial*. You shall find in that book reflections of what you have already experienced, read, imagined, desired... but with a sheen of another world, another time; time which has not yet existed but one which has also receded just beyond reach... However, today is not the time to dive into that magic tome. For now, we only sample some of the thoughts which have bubbled up in *Proverbial* over a very small part of its rich literary history. As you dive into this minor rivulet, an advice comes to mind for a fuller life:

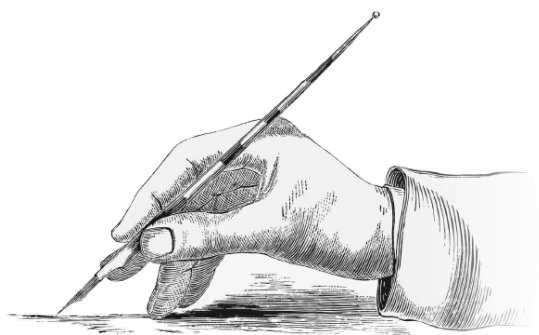
“*Live not inside a paper submarine.*”

But beware

“*It is for the crowds to egg on, and for the fool to stop.*”

May you find repose in *Proverbial* on many bright afternoons of solitude.

Vijay Fafat
Singapore
5 March, 2026



Too Low...

Of little use, discerning the shades
at the bottom of the barrel.



Observe

The crescendo rises in the silence
between the octaves.





Entrance

The boundaries of
hell are bricked by
desire and apathy.

Falling Short

The Bible is missing a psalm of universal love.



Power

When destiny becomes the man,
providence becomes the wand of his will.



Provenance

Unbanked rivers of grief
find new monsoons.



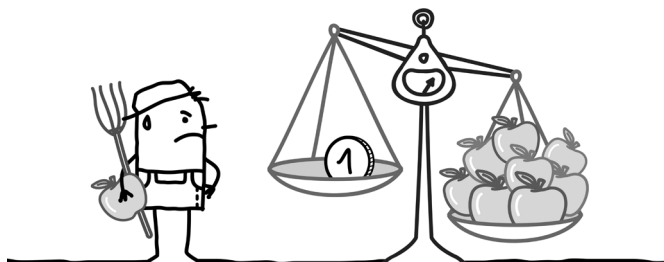
Dharma

Ask not of the windmills
what stillness they breathe.



Implicit

The unbalanced scale extracts its price.





Feral

The empire of rust is
always on the prowl for
weak iron.

Leaking Boat

A fool's oar and
the water's floor
are made for
each other.



Bräzen

A thief caught will lie
through the spinach stuck in his teeth.



Equalized

All colors burn down
to grey ash.



Misery-ly

A dank corner rejoices in
cobwebs.



Dangerous

Test not the tempered steel of rusted temper.



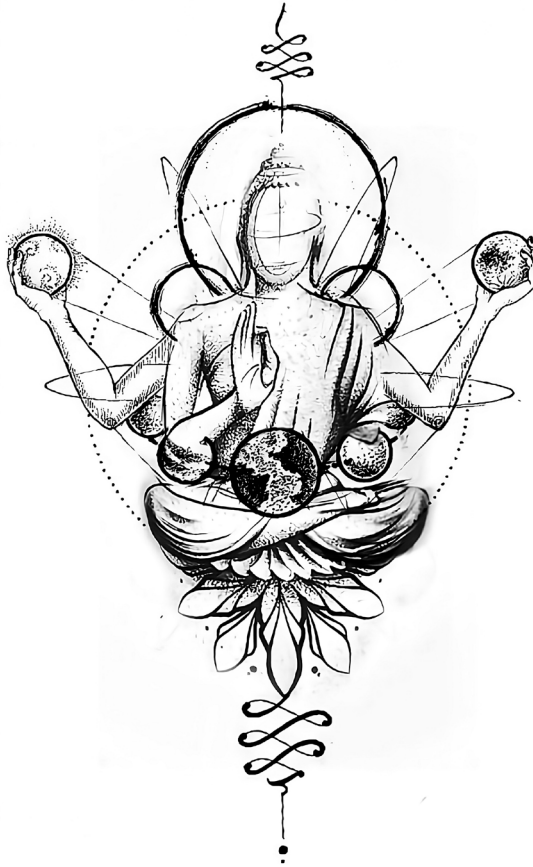


As Needed

Swaying joy in a swirling goblet,
solace in a casket of sunken wine.

Slippery

Poisoned is the tongue of the mind when it
lends ears to calumny.*



* Calumny = slandering; the making of false statements or rumors about someone who is intended to be defamed.

Theologic

The Pope appears a jester in the court of logic.



* Calumny = slandering; the making of false statements or rumors about someone who is intended to be defamed.



With Pointed Look

Utterly useless is a nail with a limp end.

Throw the Book At...

Brandish not the Bible as a bloody baton.



Corrôsiive

The hinges of hubris rust in their salt of pride.



Revelation

A self hidden in
the dark is afraid
of knowing its
shadow.



Hauteur

Royalty does not
do nuance.

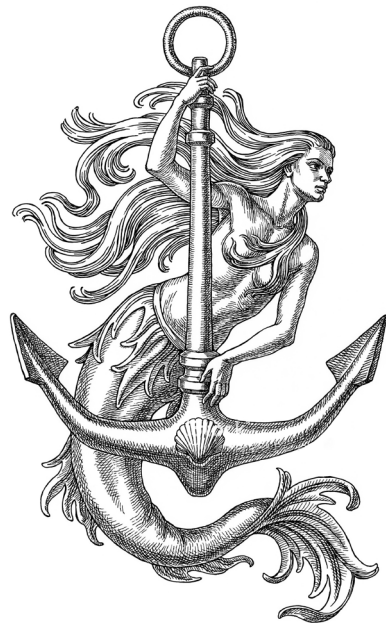
Papyrus Tigers

Many are the
colonels of a
paper army.



Moorings

An anchor is only as
good as the sea-bed it
finds.





Awareness

Know your Friday's
from your February's.

So to Speak

Wisdom is a miser guarding its
storehouse with sharp wits.



Dervish Dance

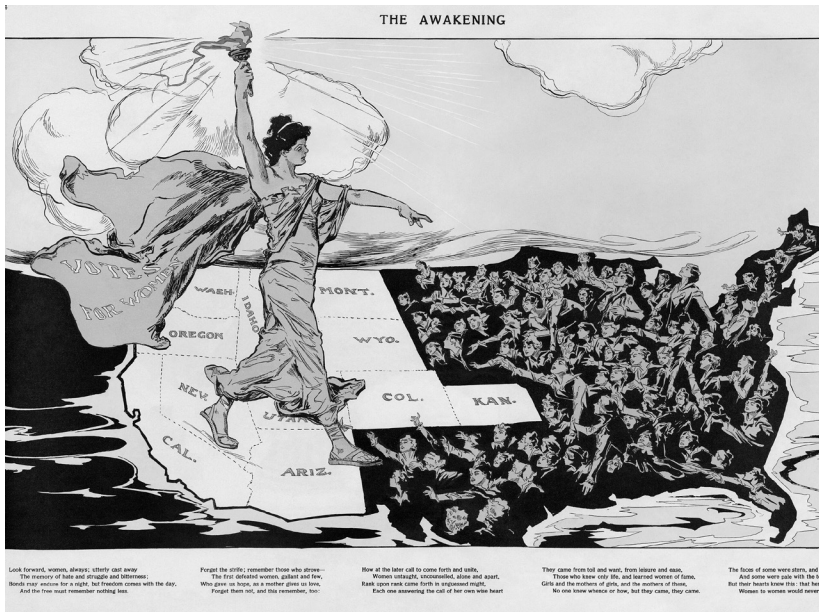
When the fever takes hold, everyone
becomes Rumi at a hukkah party.*



* Jalal al-Dín Muhammad Rumí (1207-1273), was a Sufi mystic, poet, and founder of the Islamic brotherhood known as the Mevlevi Order. Rumi is an influential figure in Sufism, and his thought and works loom large both in Persian literature and mystic poetry in general.

Upheaval

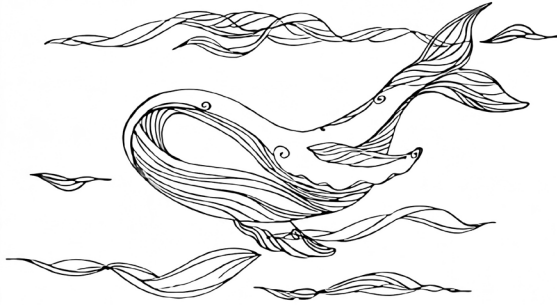
Bitter is the convention,
bitter still the rebellion.



The image shows the success of the Suffrage movement in the US, where the women first earned to the right to vote in 1920, under the 19th Amendment of the US Constitution.

A Truth

Truth is just a small whale
swimming in an ocean of grey...



Advice

The best defense against sarcasm
is to take it literally.



Adapt

In forbidding cliffs,
befriend the chilling vertigo.



King

Blessed is the doctor on the island of ills.



Pedestal

A sight what when falls a star!



Revision

The ink of victory rewrites history.



Dignified Grace

The tattered walls of a hut defend their
province with unfailing dignity.



Repetition

Every history is a prophecy.



Safe-Keeping

A grave never walks off with the epitaph.*



- * 1. Someone of deep trust does not cheat you out of valuables.
- 2. Used to express disbelief about an occurrence.

Deviant

Dark arts paint the sacred.*



* The sacred and the divine are mixed with mysticism, wonder, as well as the potential to unleash dark forces within.



Ears

Few can hear the
sound of truth.

Aged Again

Time paints itself
grey in the teeth
and white in the
hair.



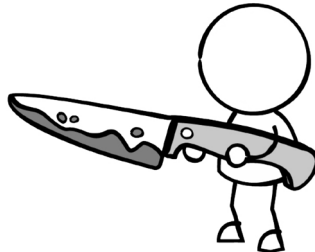
Selftoxication

A narcissist is a
grape drunk on
its own wine.



Liability

A dagger without
its handle is
dangerously useless.



Rosy Thorn

Bringers of honey, bringers of sting.





Empath

A drop of sympathy washes a thousand tears.



Exalted Perch

Even in benevolence, the gods can
only look down upon Man.

Untrusted

In dark times do ears and eyes
become false messengers.



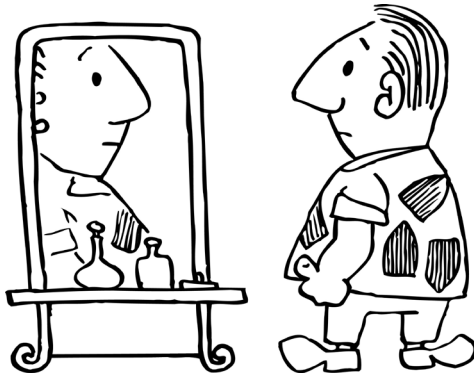
After-taste

Bitter is the backwash of the tides of faith.



All Talk...

Sometimes your shirt is louder than your deeds.



Grapevine

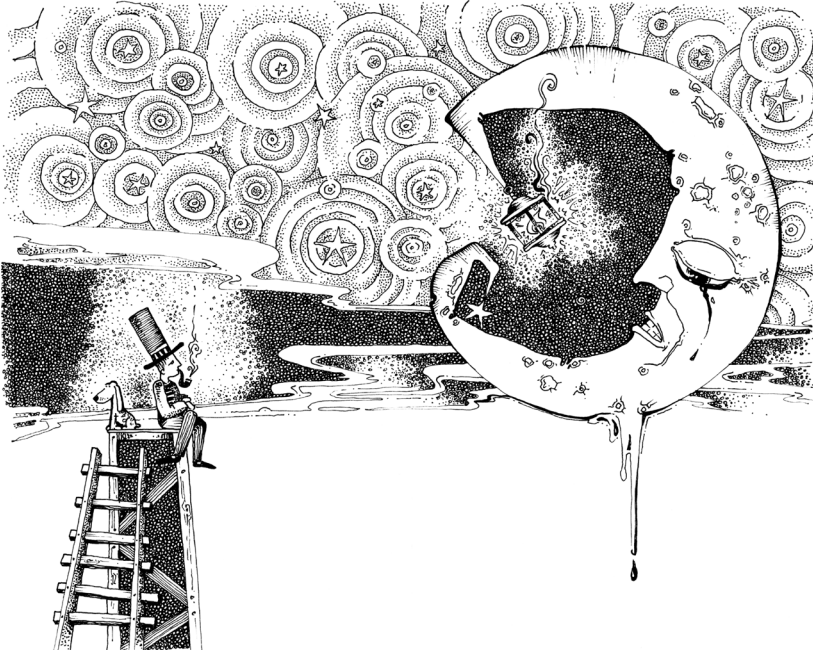
Sacred is the last drop of wine.



Just a Swig

Drink your solace from bottom up.





Give-up

Sweeping vision,
minor consolations.

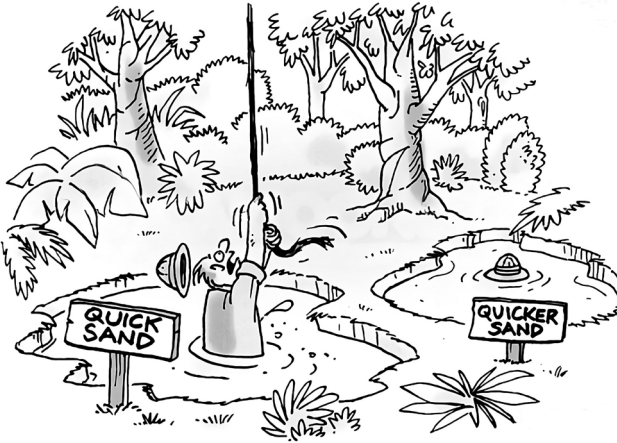
Ammunition

Boast not of a catapult with pebbles to fling.



Sinking

Tread lightly in the land of wild bogs.



Diet

The equator of waist expands in haste.



In Heat

When passion mounts,
the cold mind seeks its leave.



Observe

Afore the eyes falls the unnoticed detail.





Endless

Man's desire does
not sate with the
ocean in his palms.

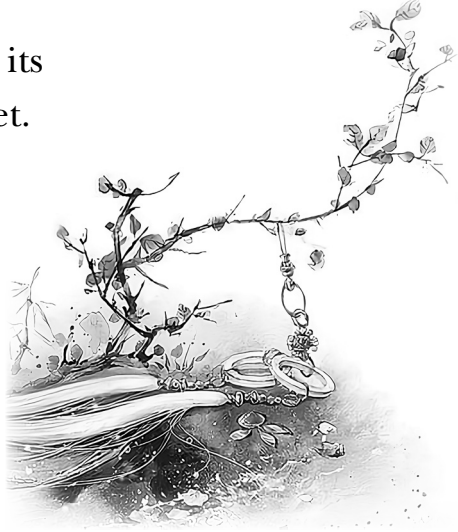
Blazing

Who has ever
taken away the
power of shadows
from the sun?



Undestined

Altruism often loses its way in a hand-basket.



Dispersal

Blessed is the leaking pot of gratitude.

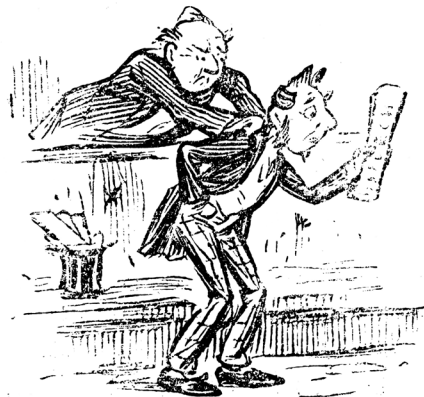
Asks Patience

Saddle not a barbarian with table manners.



Excuses

Meandering promises malingering.



Often...

Towering reputations,
mountains weighing an ounce.



Step-In!

The open door invites with abandon.



Topography

Geography is shaped by human divisions, not continental drift.



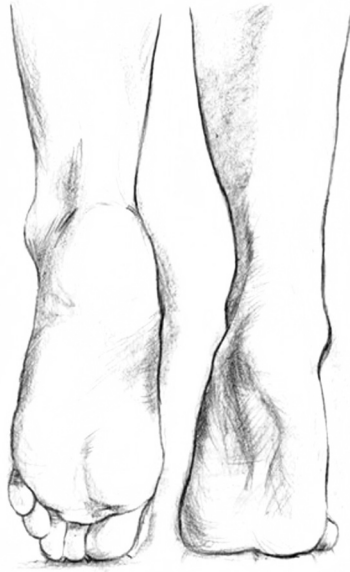
Expediency

A stitch in time may save nine, but once a man is in tatters, best to visit the thrift store.



Gandhian

At every step, the
soles forgive the feet.



Audacity

Only a fool cares
to drain the sea
with a sieve.



Try

Half correct is not
half bad!

Salve

Golden honey for
bitter tongues.



Ipso Facto

Promises made, betrayals earned.



Figures

An abstraction is a wooden
frame without its wood.



Grime-ace

A polished gem fears a mote of dirt.



Release

Those who live in misery die with joy.



*In Shaolin**

Soft in tongue,
swift in hand.



* The Shaolin Temple, a historic Buddhist monastery in Henan, China, is famed as the birthplace of Zen Buddhism and Shaolin Kung Fu, a unique blend of martial arts and meditation.

Reinforcement

A bitter man sits around
grinding Dhatara seeds.*



* “Datura” or “Dhatara” is the Hindi word for a genus of nine species of highly poisonous flowering plants belonging to the nightshade family. Metaphorically, a man is a *dhatara* seed when he plots bitterness in the lives of others.

Prê-réquisite

A paupered mind never follows the
light of Bhagwad Gita.*



* “*Bhagwad Gita*”, or “The Song of the Lord”, is one of the foremost scriptures of the world’s religious canon, rising as a centrepiece in the great Indian epic, “*The Mahabharat*”.

Waylaid

A pious clergy often gets robbed
on the wrong side of Sunday.*



* Something going wrong right after one has made amends or done something right.

Euphoric

Truth dances on a soulful guitar.



War's Bréeze

A coat-of-arms rains a coat of ash.



Misplaced

A pilgrim often loses his purpose to the winds.



Clashing

Words are not heard while swords speak.



Unannounced

Reality, in one stroke, strikes.



Underarmed

He who battles with flawed blade
holds a cracked shield.



Delicate

Knots of sand crumble at the touch of water.



Stepwise

Errors of parts, error of whole.



Misinterprétations

In dark do people read their Quran.



A Personal Crêdo

Stand tall, if alone.



History Lesson

The sword transcends the blood-life of the enemy.



Scarlet Letter

A written word cannot be erased with more ink.



Toppler

Never trust a three-legged chair.



Jumbled

Even kings are lost in a shuffled pack of cards.



Aimless

Hath ever a frog churned rich butter
from ceaseless thrashing?



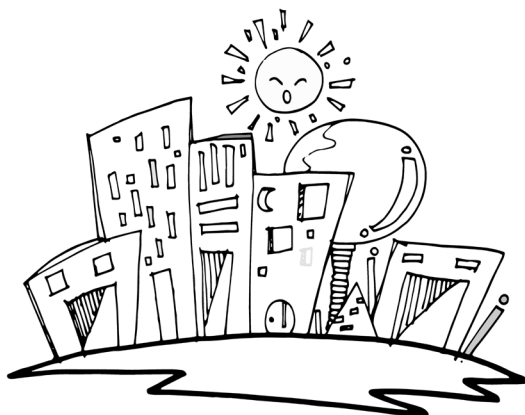
Mentality

Pagan thoughts, virtuous minds.



Looks

Low are the ceilings of mighty dwellings.



Levitate

A ringing lute floats on its own strains.



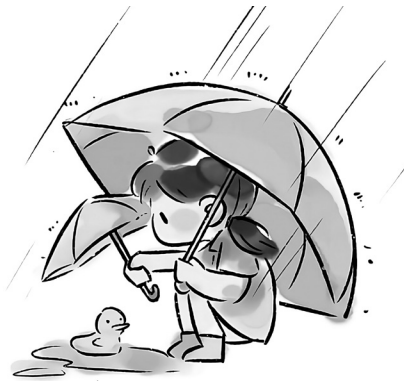
Repeated

The ancestors erred not in naming us “Erratum”.



But Tall!

The ugly duckling walks a solitary path.



Proverbia - *An Offering of Coconuts from the Land of Fog*

Action!

Better a Doyen of Deeds than a
Prince of Platitudes.



Common Company

He who lies lies not alone on an island of liars.



Loaded

Fatigue not your labors with saddling doubts.



Implications

An epithet carries its own liabilities.*



* Epithets or characterizations by labels can be easily misunderstood.



Disturb It!

Chaos fertile, order sterile.

Adaptation

Roars as a lion, hops as a lamb.



Betrâyal

Beware the third edge of the sword.*



* The third edge being the cowardice of deceit, which does not come from the sword itself but whose presence may blind you to the honor of the sword.

Too Late

Of what use the light in a coffin
once the soul be dead?



The illustration is by Speed Lancelot (1860-1931), a British artist who drew it for a story book, "The Red Fairy Book" by Andrew Lang (1844-1912).

*Ersatz**

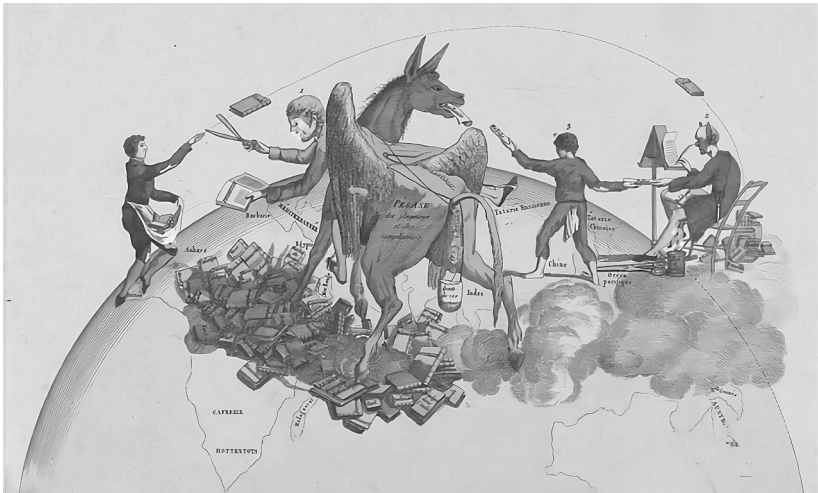
Loud is the pretense of a hollow fortune.



* “Ersatz” refers to a substitute or imitation, typically of inferior quality.

Second-Hand Value

Borrowed currency of thought loses
its charm overnight.



This is a political cartoon titled “*Cartoon on the Universelle Géographies from Conrad Malthe-Brun*”, an etching from April 1812. It critiques Conrad Malte-Brun’s work “*Esquisse de la Géographie Universelle*”. The winged horse represents the “Pegasus of the plagiarists”. A plagiarist with scissors is shown on the horse’s back, referred to as a “bird with the borrowed feathers”. Another writer with donkey ears is training two plagiarists.



Prëttify

Embroider a weave of
silk on a jacket of jute.

If Only...

Logic overcomes
not an enmity.



Self-Clutched

Hubris grabs you by
the tail once it fogs
your mind.



Wisdom

Learned is the man
with the silence of
seven tongues.

Misguided

A ship with a broken compass is guided
by a rudder of rotten reeds.





Unilateral

A mirror shows but one side.

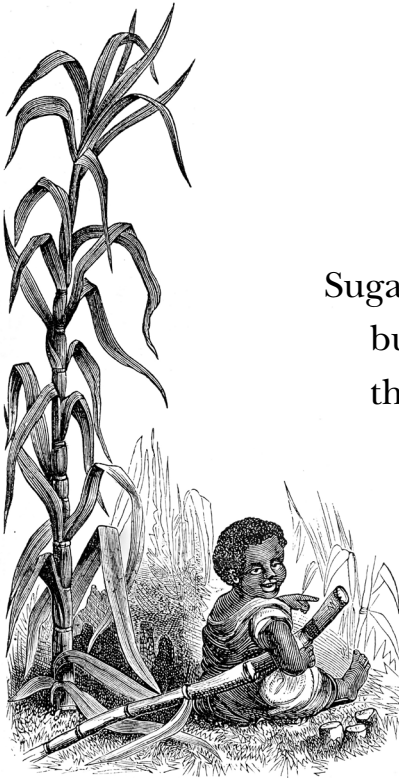
Hidden

Never is a dagger's blade
sheathed in innocence.



Contrôl

Sugarcane may be sweet
but eat it not right
through its roots.*



* This is based on a Marathi
proverb.

Too Many Chiefs

Every native wants to
shake salt into the soup.



Appearances

A loin cloth in an
emporium does not
a neck-tie become.

Priceless

Grace and
elegance are not
found for sale
in the common
bazaar.

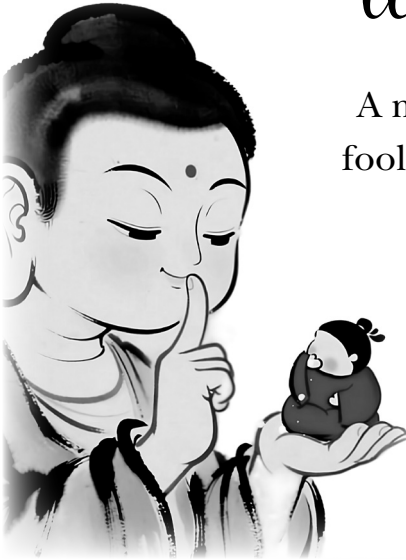


Caustic

Bitter tongue
breeds bitter bile.

Weakest Link

A man is only as wise as the
fools with whom he consorts.



Fragile

The mirror of trust
dons brittle glass.



Bridled

Reason departs from passion too late.



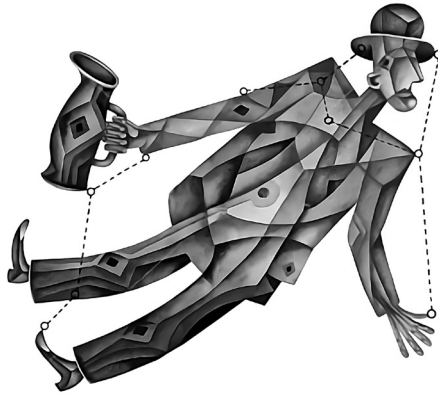
Rudderless

In the land of many masters, ministers of confusion divide the people.



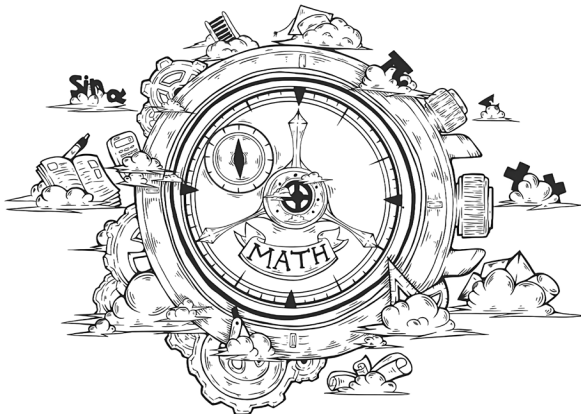
Undeserved

Cheap is the perfume of success ill-gotten.



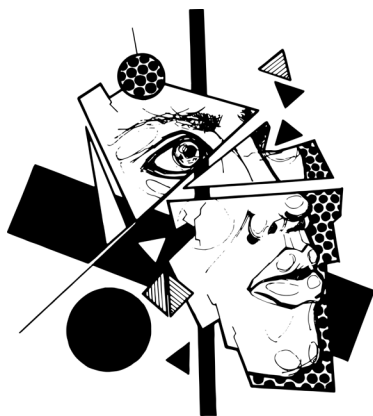
Stop for the Roses

Draw not too fast from the well of time.



Haze

The intoxication of first love lasts a lifetime.



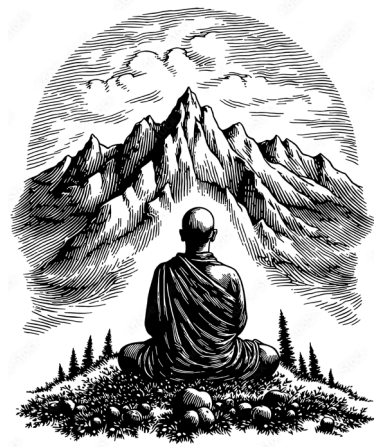
Leftovers

A war-torn world is discarded
from a second-hand shop.



Reality

A lost map does not create hidden land.



Seepage

Sly slant to thoughts, wry twist to actions.



Fearsome

Blessed are the sensitivities of an Ayatollah!*



* Used to mock someone at a higher position.

Smoke & Mirror

Beware the Hindu punditry of
paunch and puppetry.*



* Beware the superficial and dogmatic religious practices.

Cheapster

A poetaster writes doggerels.*



* A poetaster is one who writes sub-standard poetry. A doggerel is a badly written verse, maybe even humorous. The proverb is used to emphasize or stress something ridiculous that a person might do creatively.

Surrendered

In a Church of Fools, theodicy
bows before idiocy.*



* Theodicy, in general, proclaims the supremacy of divinity (and specifically, it tries to explain the existence of evil even when reality is supposed to be governed by divine, benevolent forces).



Unsated

It does not suffice
for thirst to catch
the shadows of
falling raindrops...

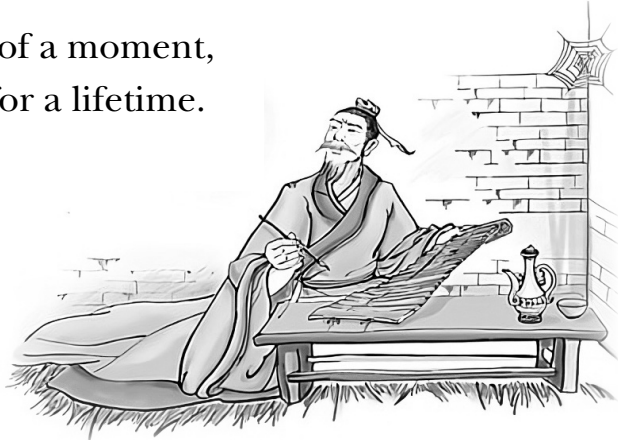
Painter In The Sky

All is the artwork of
a greater will.



After-Effects

Impulse of a moment,
regrets for a lifetime.



Surfing

Wandering virtues
roam on roving eyes.

*Err-Uctance**

When the spirit's unwilling, errors are unwitting.



* Erructance is a neologism, a portmanteau of 2 words, “error” and “reluctance”.



Boasting

Tall words, blank dreams,
whistling kettle, puffing steam.

Elegant Dismissal

Ask dead-beats to file their
complaints in Sanskrit.*



* Used when one wants to convey that requests from delinquent elements should be deflected or ignored.

Submission

A treaty of cowardice is wrapped in impotence.



The image is a caricature of the United States offering the Britannia a treaty chalice or dagger of war in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty 1840s.



Non-stop

Stubborn argument, endless malaise.

Eaten Away

When the seeds of conspiracy fill the granaries of
a kingdom, termites rule the roost.



Crêdo's Geometry

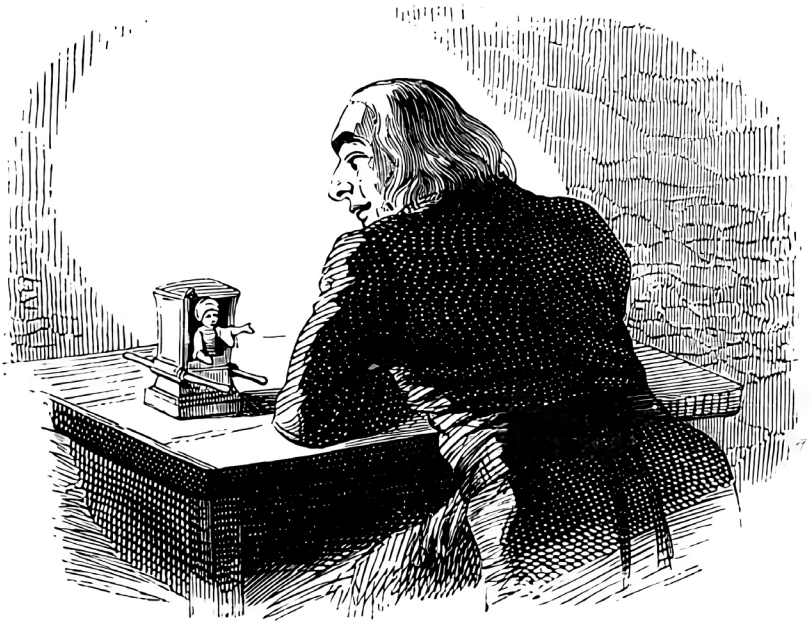
The moral rhumb-line falls diagonally
in a crooked world.*



* A rhumb line or a loxodrome is defined a curve on the Earth's surface that intersects all longitudes at a constant angle. This constant angle allows a navigator to maintain a fixed compass bearing to follow the path. On a Mercator projection map, a rhumb line appears as a straight line. When the constant angle is 0° or 180° , the rhumb line follows a meridian of longitude (a great circle). When the angle is 90° , it follows a latitude.

Such in Life!

Ride drunken on a swaying palanquin.*



* meaning: Be light hearted.

A “palanquin”, or “*palki*”, is a traditional, wheel-less, covered litter used for transporting one person, typically featuring a box, couch, or seat suspended from poles and carried on the shoulders of four to six bearers.



Not Easy

Forgive there where forgiving hurts.

Stop Not...

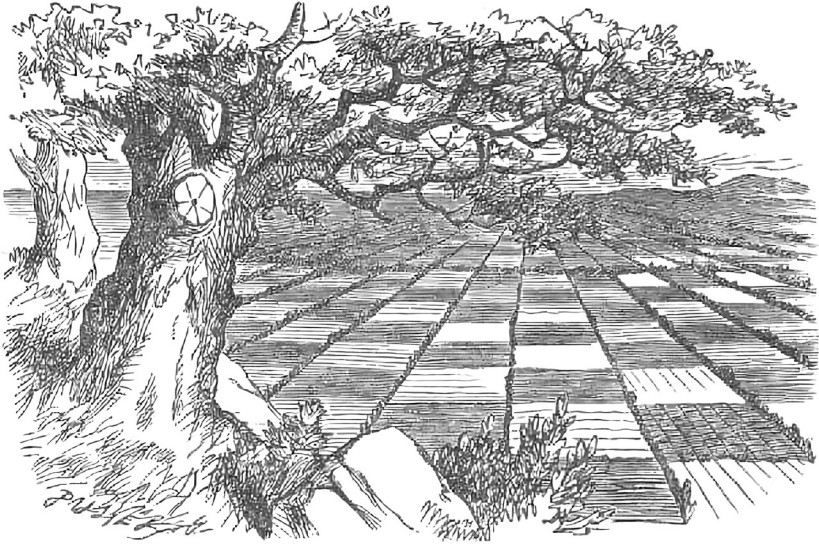
And as the saying goes in the bottle of rum,
your rolling stones gather momentum.



Honey Bee

She who carries her own heaven
spreads its nectar in generous drops.





Off-Diagonal

Dark is the heart of a chess bishop,
ever condemned to tread black squares.

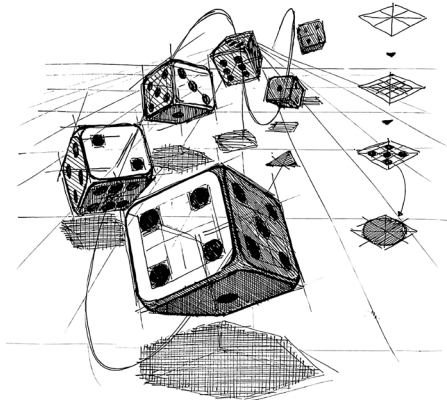
Wasted

Unused wisdom, rusting talisman.



Number's Up

Death is a die which does not lie.



Worthless

The logic of religion sells for
straws at the flea market.



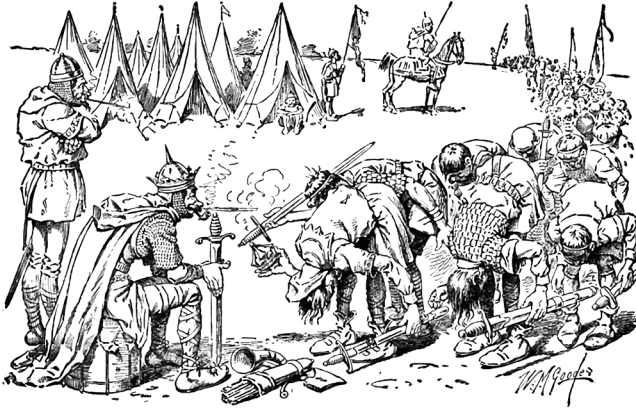
Cure

Heels over head heal head-over-heels.



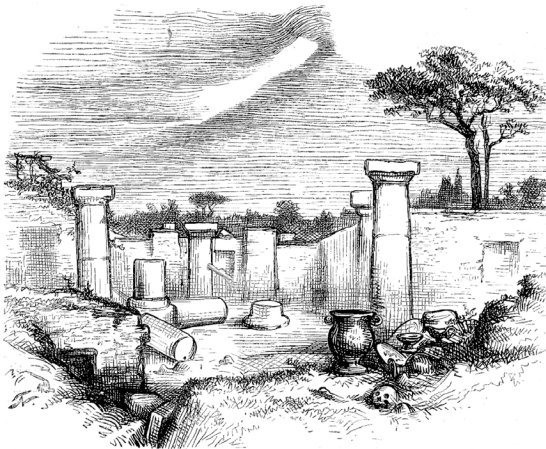
Overlooked

In a war of giants, the dwarfs escape.



Solace

Of ash is the comfort given by the last pillar in fire.



Adversary

Pugilism is an art utterly wasted on cobwebs.



Protector

The thatched roof of a hut measures its coolness.



And Yet...

Genius and Stupidity drink at the
same fountain in equal measure.





Charity

Poverty wails when wealth keeps its fist tight.

Say What?

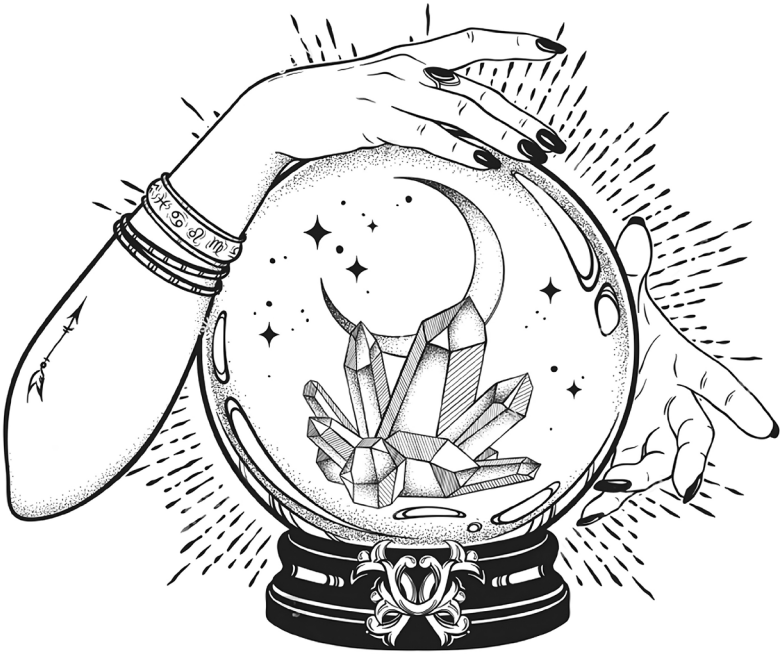
Uphill he falls when downhill he goes.*



* It is difficult to recover once you start on a wrong path.

Sing It!

The ball of fortune rolls to a song of nine pins.*



* Be happy and light in the heart, and the fortune of good health will favor you.

Incompatible

Either 'I' go or Ego.



Contemplate

Meditate a thousand steps
before the first foot-fall.



In The End...

All is ash in
the Void,
without
exception.

Risque

The mind
blushes when
imagination
prevails.



Following

The blessed psalm heralds its own choir.



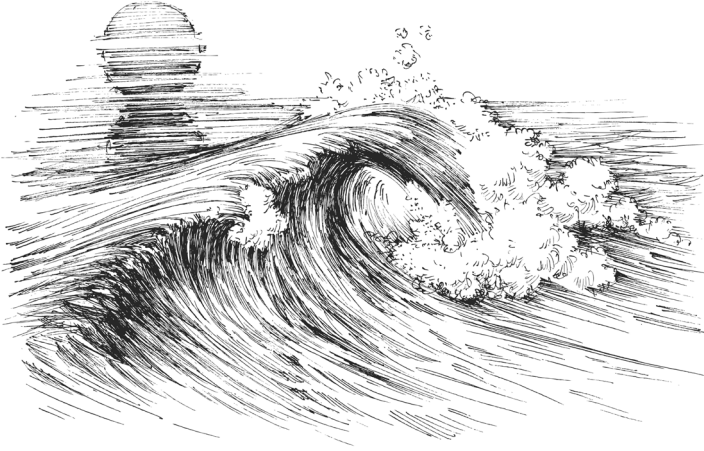


Aprôpos

Wrong in the ask is fallen in the gain.

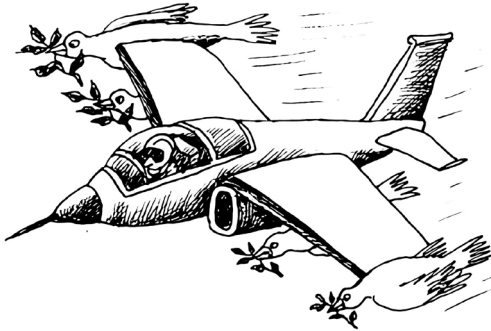
Ever and Anon

Thankless is the task of the tide-breaker.



Human Tragedy

In war we revel,
in peace shrivel.



Fast Bait

Promises of haste curl up as little lies.



Tell Yourself

Strive not for a name like an illegitimate off-spring.



Double Nothing

Blind fools chase mermaids in a mirage.



Incomplete

How one strives to write fuller sentences with a broken pen!



In Lieu Of...

One cannot become a pundit by proxy.



Consumed

The chasm of avarice swallows whole,
without a belch.



Linguistic Life

Work on laughter, play on words.



Menu

The road to Purgatory is paved with choices.



Blindly

Faith it is to dive into a pool of faith opaque...



Inward

It suffices to see your reflection in a single mirror.



Blind

Long leaps of faith fall well short of trust.



Emergence

Night in passion or tears,
dawn in the knowing smile.



Watched Pot

When no one looks, no one does.



Ossified

Academia is full of card-carrying sand-ostriches,
heads buried in comforting sands.



Proverbia - *An Offering of Coconuts from the Land of Fog*

Human Affairs

A patina of rust hides the rot inside.



Painstaking

Precious are the pearls born of turbulent waters.



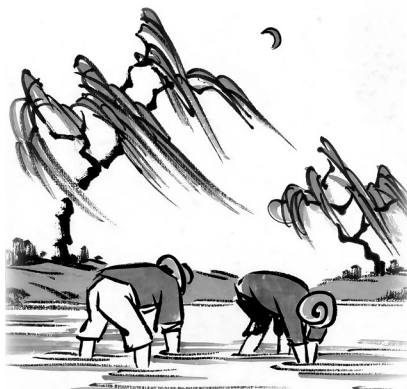
Semi-deaf

The wet in thought hear with half an ear.



Easy Choices

Virtue is cheap in the land of good.



Defy

The pen which rebels signs its symbols for the ages...



Chaotic

Confusion bleeds the heart of reason.



Work

Lazy hands maroon the skiff.



*Post-Prāndial**

A filled stomach pontificates empty words.



“Prandial” is a formal word which means “relating to a meal or eating”.

Charlatan

Beware the man of artful hands and foreign tongue.



By the Bucket-load

In scarlet wheel-barrows must you
wheel in your sins.*



* The phrase “scarlet sin” refers to the concept of deep, conspicuous, and seemingly permanent moral transgression or guilt. The imagery emphasizes the severity and ingrained nature of sin in the eyes of God.

Occupational Hazard

Shepherds of cold winds spread a breath of frigidity.



Snap-Back

Fame snatches with true bite from the rear
what it delivers with false teeth from the front.



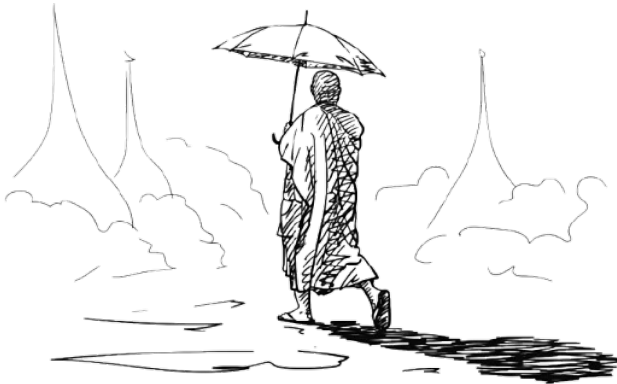
Foundation

On easy sands do principles shift.



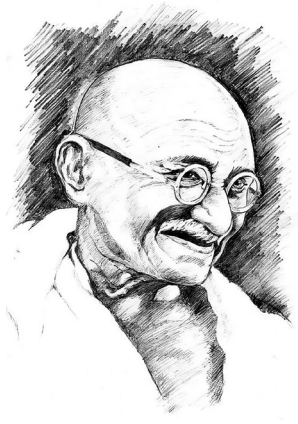
Beat a Different Path...

All roads may lead to Rome but
try to reach Rangoon.



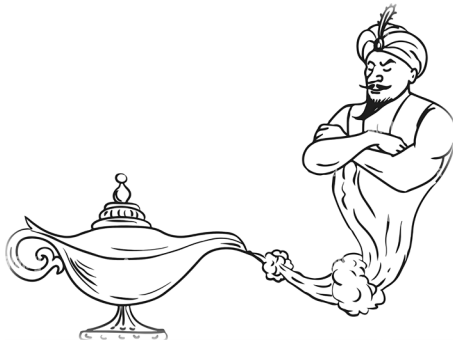
Protect It!

Hold your peace in a box locked.



Ask Not!

Scratch not Aladdin's lamp without purpose,
for an idle genie is a Devil's headache.



Relatives

All easy waters and paper boats of kinship.



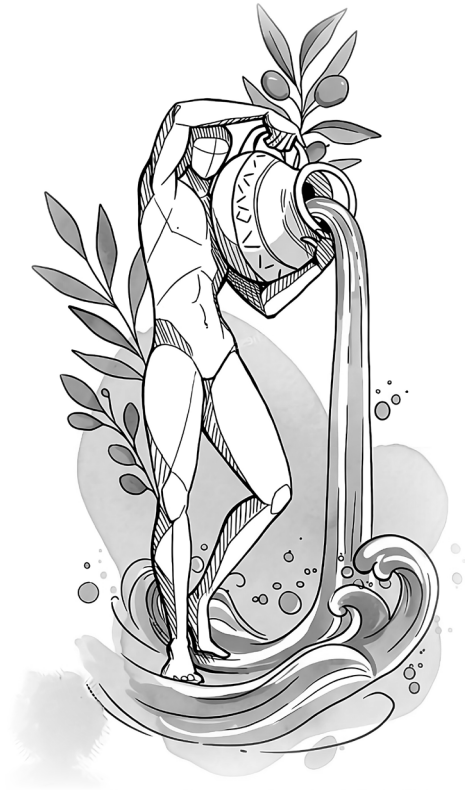
Enslaved

Money from Arrogance brings
shackles of Obedience.



Wrong Spirit

Pinched is the neck of the nectar jar
when the sommelier pours with a miserly heart.





Frée Speech

The Door of Truth in a tyrant's palace
opens into the slaughterhouse.

Contrast

Wise men are lost in the absence of fools.¹

And

Wise men are lost in a garden of fools.²



¹ Wise men end up arguing amongst themselves;

² Wise men do foolish things in the company of fools.

A Full Meal

Ante-jentacular rumblings cease only
with post-prandial dessert.*



* “Jentacular” relates to “breakfast” and “prandial” relates to lunch or dinner. The phrase is typically used metaphorically to imply that what is a “need” generally sates only after the satiation of significant “greed”.

Standards

Sell for a straw the proof about Truth
and buy for a stack any rumor, forsooth!*



* forsooth = indeed (used for emphasis or to express surprise or indignation)

*Tenth Commandment**

Spicy is the soup cooked by the neighbor's wife.

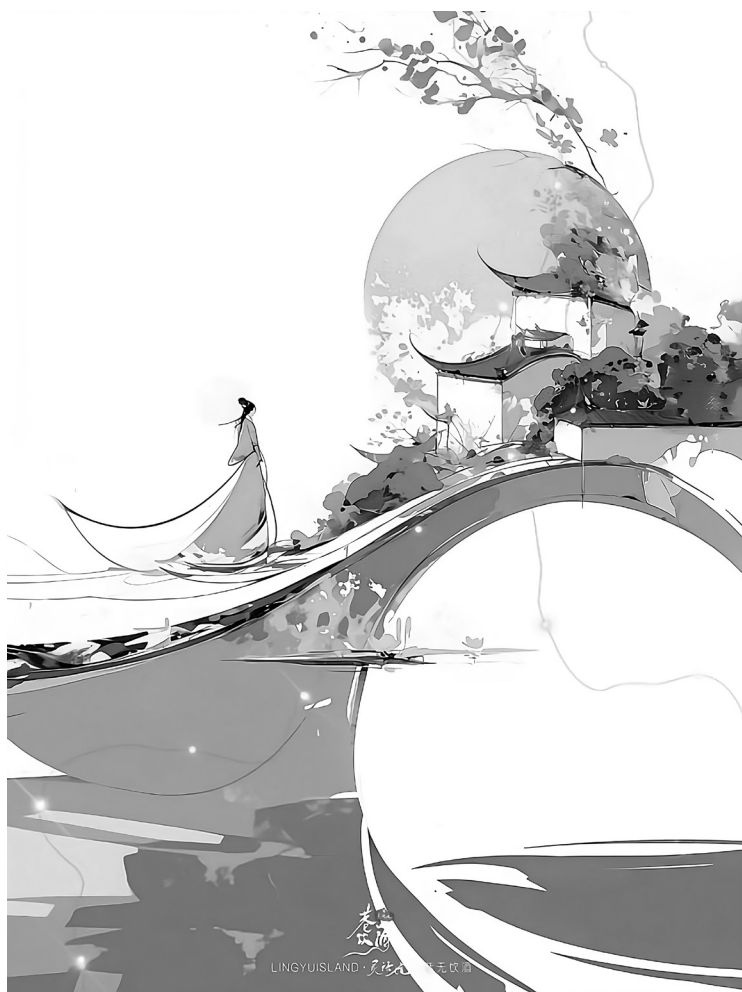


* The 10th Commandment forbids lustful desire for your neighbor's possessions, spouse, servants, etc.

Proverbia - *An Offering of Coconuts from the Land of Fog*

Naturally

Cheapliness is next to gaudiness.





Dozing

Even Buddha needs a nudge once in a while
because he has nodded off in his thoughts.

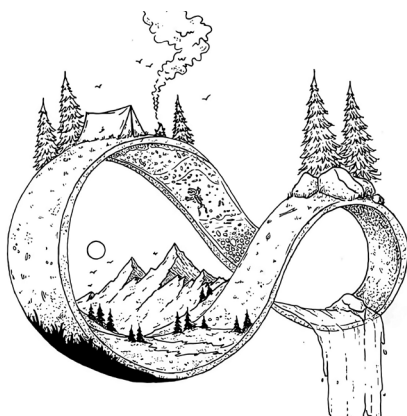
Engendrê

Rumors beget their own truths.



Corrêspôndence

Art recalls life, dreams dote on desires.



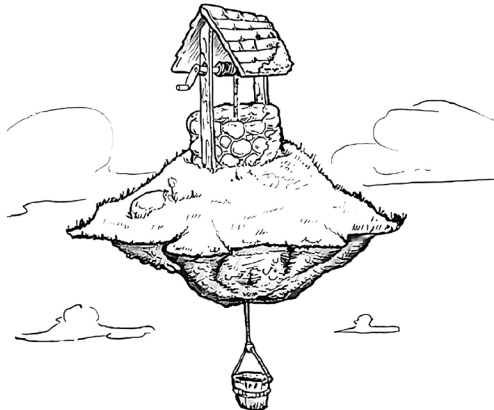
Borrowed Glory

A plagiarist is a writer of all, author of none.



Return Gift

Wish your well-wishers the wishing well.



Anarchy

On a crooked chessboard, the pawns run at slants.



Together

The mind grieves while the body persists.



As They Should

The blades of romance cut to the heart.



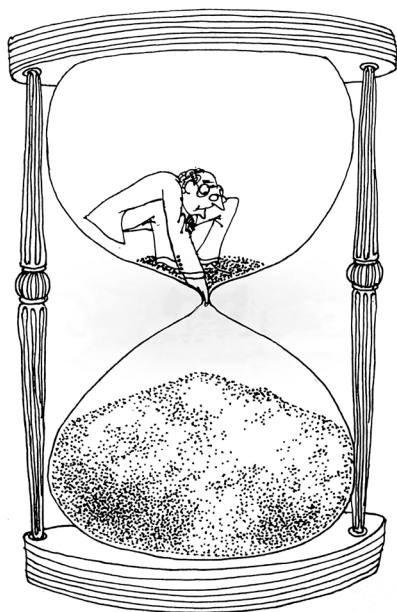
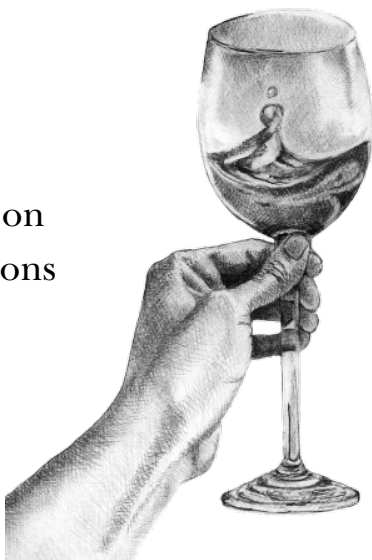
Unfolding

Crimson are the ants of
"What might have been!".



Said the Oenophile

Waste it is of good wine on
the philistine who questions
its richness.



Relativity

Swift is the passage
of time for the one
condemned to the
gallows.

Idle Skills

A sword hung in the
corner catches the rust
of cowardice.



Immutable

Virtue departs only
once.

Opportunity

Take what you can get before
the foot leaves the door.



Reposed

Easy is the conscience garbed in naked truth.



Launcher

An arrow is only as straight as its bow.



Fated

Good ideas die at the gallows of
poor execution.



Finger-Wagging

Behind every boast is an inner reproach.



Continual

Nature grieves in lasting instalments.*



* Nature divides grief into lasting instalments.

Fire

Temper tempteth you.



Shortfall

For the dullard, the stars do not
suffice for wonder.



The way of mortal life

Every road to paradise passes through the
purgatory of sin.



The image displays Domenico di Michelino's 1465 fresco wherein Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) is shown holding a copy of "*Divine Comedy*" - an epic poem about Heaven, sins, Purgatory, etc - next to the entrance to Hell, the seven terraces of Mount Purgatory, and the city of Florence, with the spheres of Heaven above.

Discordant

Men of varied tongues grow weary in Babel.*



* The Tower of Babel is a story from Genesis 11 in the Bible about humanity's attempt to build a city and a tower reaching the heavens to make a name for themselves and avoid being scattered. God considers this a challenge to His might and confuses their single language by sowing in dissonance, causing them to scatter across the Earth and stop building the tower.

Bogged

Stagnant ideas swim in swamp gas.



Waterlogged

Sunk in waters three Bombay monsoons deep.



A Basic Ask...

Be not a beggar in kindly emotions.



Failing History

Arguments of reason are never
settled by the blood of steel.



A Problem

Solutions rushed are problems found.



Red Tape

The molasses of bureaucrats
brims with moles and asses.





Bröken

Moses was mistaken in those pieces of clay.

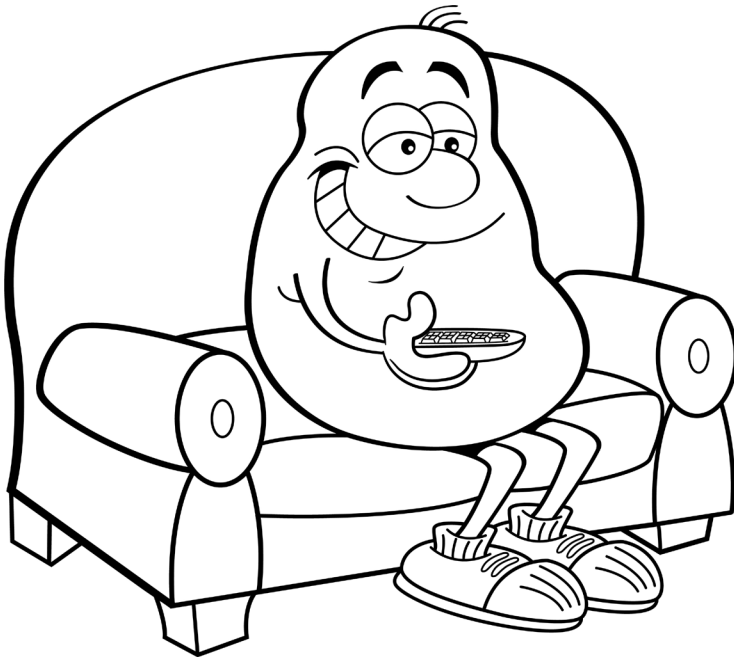
Counterfeit

Cheap are the coins of gold
minted in a cold hearth.



*Couching Potato, Hidden Dragoon**

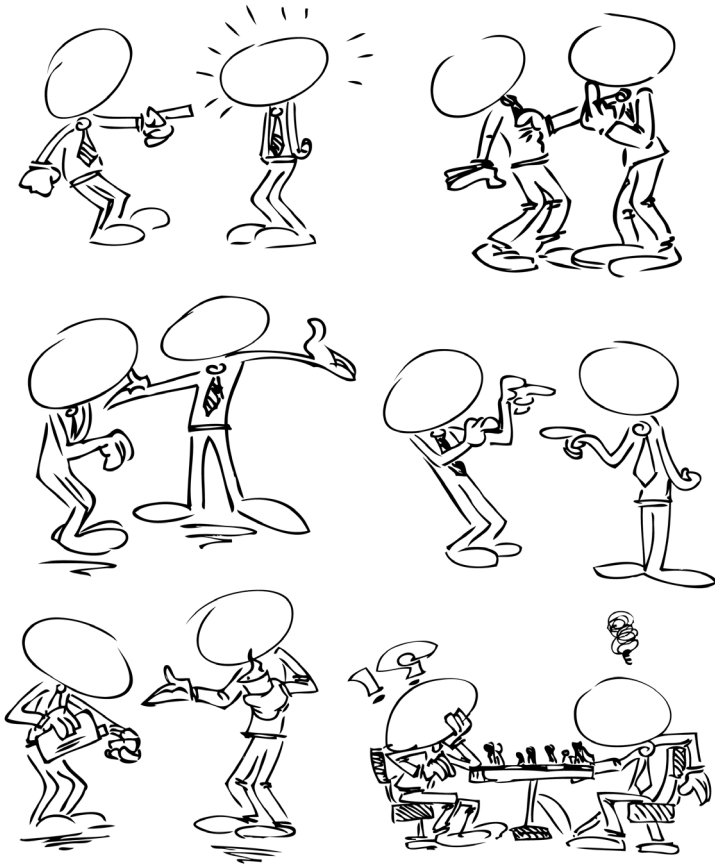
Potatoes are practitioners of couch ju-jitsu.



* A “dragoon” is a member of British cavalry (it can also mean coercing someone into doing something unwanted). The title is a play on the movie named “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”.

Irritants

Quarrelsome turns the day in the
company of pious Clergies.



Targeted

Always does it rain in the neighbor's
garden and on my leaking roof...





Luminal

Paint not the sacred in darkness.

Of course...

Fire remains a blacksmith's first love.



Domains

It is for the crowds to egg on,
and for the fool to stop.



Reach

A heaven we span in a kind act.



Staturé

Beware of *bonsai* men.*



* Stunted on purpose and short on promise.

Violinist

A fiddler fiddles fiddlesticks.*



* A fiddlestick is the bow used to play the violin. The phrase is used to speak of someone who complains regularly, like playing the complaint-violin.

Symbiotic

An eleemosynary needs an almoner.*



* Eleemoosynary = relating to or dependent on charity.

Almoner = one who provides alms or charity. The phrase is used to illustrate that something is a tautology or is vacuous, but couched in heavy finery. Political speech, for e.g. It can also be used to point out the mutual dependency of two concepts or characters.

Overwhelmed

The scales of compassion cannot
bear the weight of loaded sins.



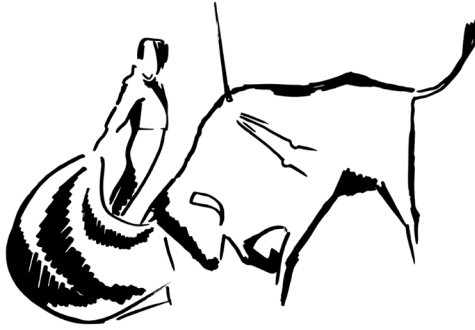
Serenity

Easy are the dreams of a resting soul.



Tragedy

He with the flamboyance of a matador
but the fate of the betrayed bull.



Extracted

Dear is the perfume from thorns squeezed.



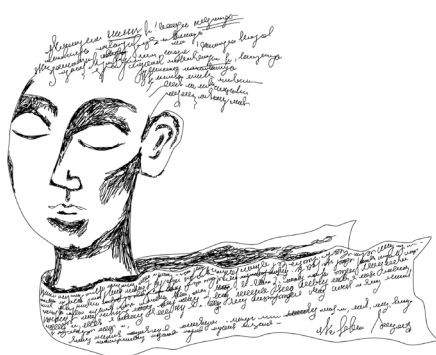
Fishlets

Little men swimming in rivulets claim the rapids.



Perhaps

Cheap are the words of the mystic
in a façade so priceless.



If Available...

Precious is the counsel of the dead.



Fleeting

Beware a hammer's friendship with the nail.



*Geodesic**

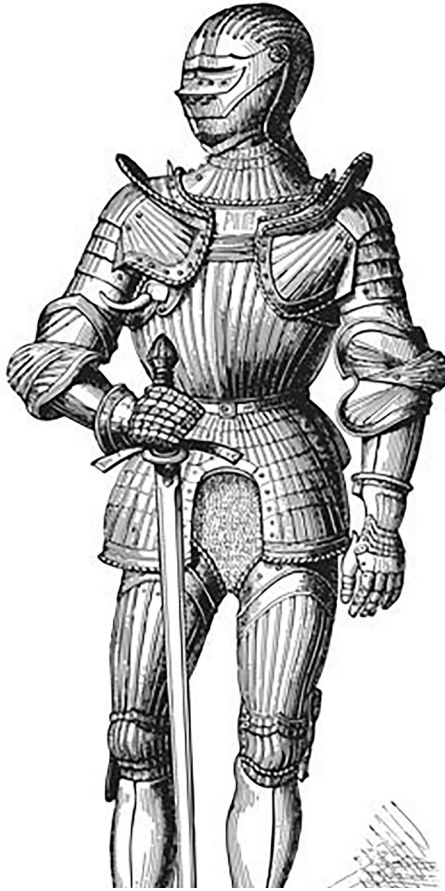
An arrow flies a crooked path in man's world.



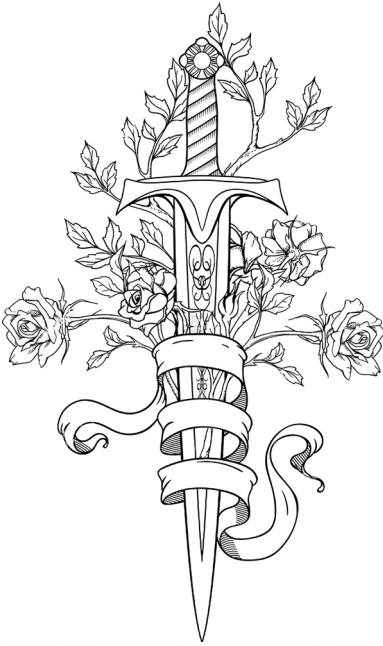
* A geodesic on a surface is the shortest path between 2 points on that surface.

*Braggadocio**

Don not a glittering armor
of fatigued metal.



* “Braggadoccio” (brag-a-doe-chio) denotes the boastful, arrogant behavior of someone who appears with confident swagger. It was the name of a character in Edmund Spenser’s (1552-1599) novel, *“The Faerie Queen”* (1590 to 1596)



Hold That Thought

Sacred is the drop
of mercy which
coats the blade of a
moving dagger.

Luxury Handbags

The forces of
marketing always
meet pliant walls
of idiocy.





Always

Vote for a woman,
cheer for the underdog.

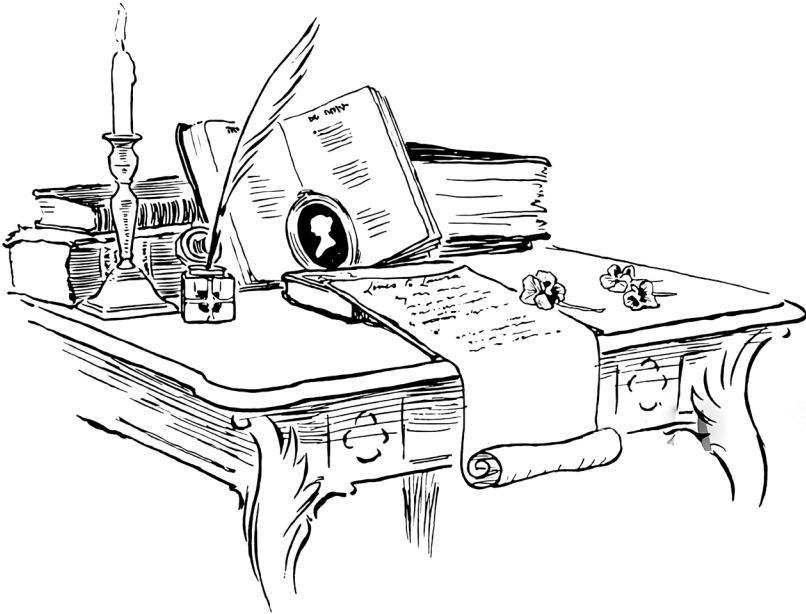
Basic Algebra

An error in thought
multiplies.



Umm-Maybe

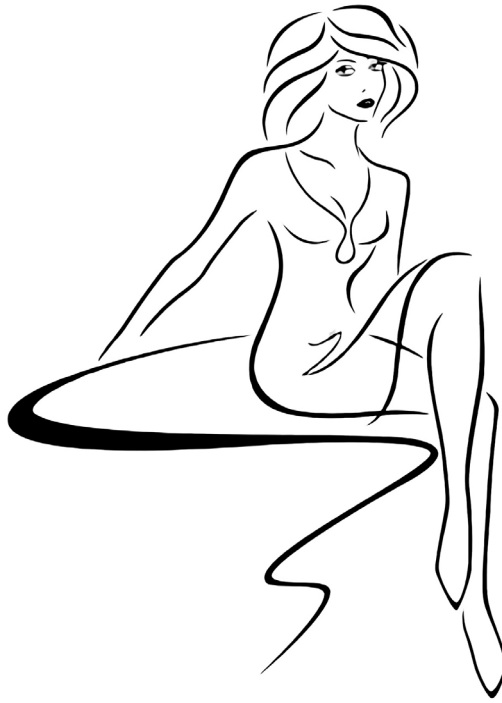
In doubtful state, hyphen-ate!*



* A literary *bon mot* which says that one should slow down and try to buy thinking time when one does not understand something in a conversation.

Sub Rosa

Sweet tongues hide betraying eyes.



* “Sub rosa” is a Latin phrase meaning “under the rose,” used to describe actions done in secret or strict privacy.

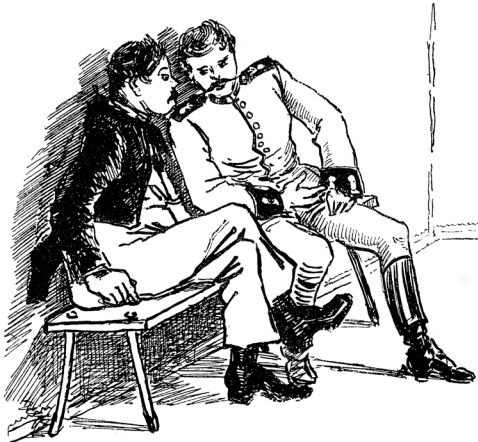
Lightweight

The common man has the heft of line-cartoons.



Hollowed

Obsequiousness is a book with no pages and a sturdy binding.



Spoken Word

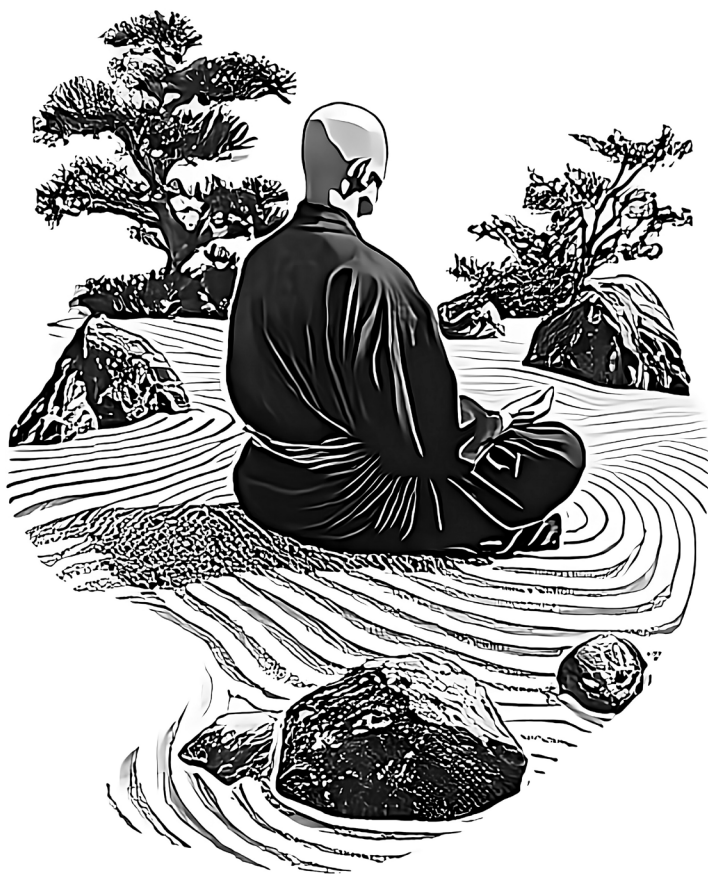
Articulation leads to artifice.



Mountainous

Rumors rise from mole-hills.





Healer

Repentance is the sewing needle for
the cuts delivered on the conscience.

Bréak's Bráke

A runner's feet tire in the sight of a restful couch.





Grinning

The blade of the crooked knife
flashes a toothy smile.

Mettle

The worthy poison tests you.



Forgotten

The past dissolves all sin.



Wait!

One does not dance on the grave of the living.



Adventure

Separate the men of mast from office-seekers.



For Want of a Nail...

An empire's sword is laid to waste by
a civil servant's red tape.





Simple Life

All one needs is a
house of clay, a pot of
water, and a smiling
door.

Rare

More precious than
the morning tears of
Nargis.*

* “*Nargis*” is a Persian and Arabic name meaning “daffodil” or “narcissus” flower, symbolizing beauty, love, purity, and new beginnings.





Darwinian

Pale philosophies
wither on dry vines.

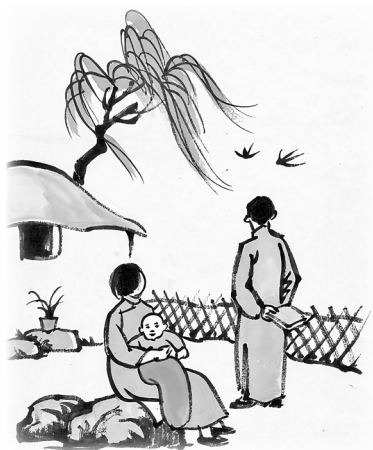
Enemy Within

Pride strikes with silent
vigor, unseen.



Contentment

Plumb your needs with measured string.



Cursed

Fleeting pleasures raise eternal damnation.



Clinging

The melting wax flows not far from the candle.



Know-Nothing

Boasts immunity to feminine charms,
he who knows not a woman.*



* A man of know-it-all ignorance.

Taste It

In the land of seven tongues,
brisk is the business of spice.*



* The more the tongues to wag, the better the spiced-up rumors spread.

Incongruities

In a fishery he demands falafel
in the Farsi language.*



* Farsi = Persian.

Meaning : Looking for sophistication in a low-brow establishment,
and that too, in a haughty manner.

Self-sabotage

Rare is the fool who asks for
approval to light his own pyre.



Tuned-in

In the fiddle of love tangles the ridddle of love.



Essentials

A gate without its hinges is but a wooden board.



Roots

A tribe without history
is a tribe without character.





Short-Term

The spoils of victory
last till the next war.

Natural Course

Ascending lust,
descending virtue.



Defiant

Insolence walks around
in iron-bound hide.



Barter

Favors demand
your virtue.

Pull-up

Grief multiplies in solitude.



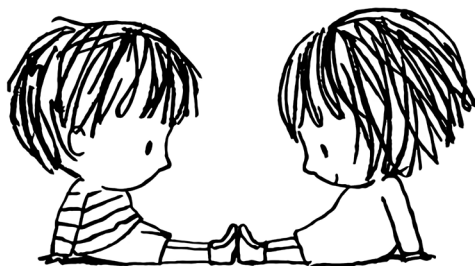
Mislabeled

Swallow the poison of eternal life and call it elixir.



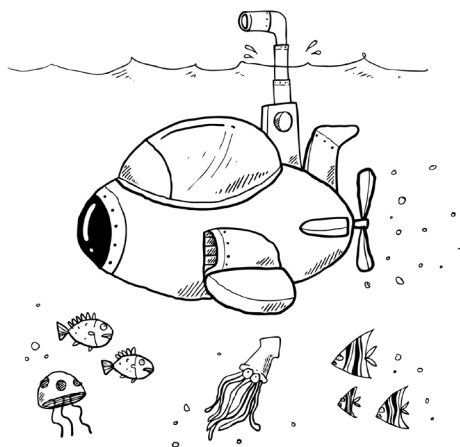
Pleasant

A smile remembered
is a memory disarmed.



Raw Material

Live not inside a paper submarine.





Index to Quotes

<i>A bitter man sits around...</i>	
Reinforcement	49
<i>A coat-of-arms rains...</i>	
War's Breeze	52
<i>A dagger without its handle...</i>	
Liability	27
<i>A dank corner rejoices...</i>	
Misery-ly	7
<i>A drop of sympathy washes...</i>	
Empath	29
<i>A fiddler fiddles...</i>	
Violinist	162
<i>A filled stomach pontificates...</i>	
Post-Prandial	123
<i>A fool's oar and the water's floor...</i>	
Leaking Boat	5
<i>A gate without its hinges...</i>	
Essentials	189
<i>A grave never walks off...</i>	
Safe-Keeping	24
<i>A heaven we span in...</i>	
Reach	161
<i>A loin cloth in an emporium...</i>	
Appearances	75
<i>A lost map does not create...</i>	
Reality	81

<i>A man is only as wise...</i>	
Weakest Link	77
<i>A mirror shows but...</i>	
Unilateral	73
<i>A narcissist is a grape...</i>	
Selftoxication	27
<i>A patina of rust hides...</i>	
Human Affairs	120
<i>A paupered mind never follows...</i>	
Pre-requisite	50
<i>A pilgrim often loses his...</i>	
Misplaced	53
<i>A pious clergy often gets...</i>	
Waylaid	51
<i>A plagiarist is a writer...</i>	
Borrowed Glory	139
<i>A poetaster writes...</i>	
Cheapster	84
<i>A polished gem fears...</i>	
Grime-ace	47
<i>A ringing lute floats on...</i>	
Levitate	60
<i>A runner's feet tire in...</i>	
Break's Brake	177
<i>A self hidden in the dark...</i>	
Revelation	14
<i>A ship with a broken compass...</i>	
Misguided	72

<i>A sight what when falls...</i>	
Pedestal	22
<i>A smile remembered is...</i>	
Pleasant	193
<i>A stitch in time may save...</i>	
Expediency	43
<i>A sword hung in the corner...</i>	
Idle Skills	143
<i>A thief caught will lie...</i>	
Brazen	6
<i>A treaty of cowardice...</i>	
Submission	91
<i>A tribe without history...</i>	
Roots	189
<i>A war-torn world is discarded...</i>	
Leftovers	80
<i>A Written word cannot...</i>	
Scarlet Letter	57
<i>Academia is full of...</i>	
Ossified	119
<i>Afore the eyes falls...</i>	
Observe	37
<i>All colors burn down...</i>	
Equalized	6
<i>All easy waters and paper...</i>	
Relatives	129
<i>All is ash in the Void...</i>	
In The End...	109

<i>All is the artwork...</i>	
Painter In The Sky	86
<i>All one needs is a house...</i>	
Simple Life	182
<i>All roads may lead to Rome...</i>	
Beat a Different Path...	127
<i>Altruism often loses its way...</i>	
Undestined	39
<i>Always does it rain in...</i>	
Targeted	158
<i>An abstraction is a wooden...</i>	
Figures	46
<i>An anchor is only as good...</i>	
Moorings	15
<i>An arrow flies a crooked...</i>	
Geodesic	168
<i>An arrow is only as straight...</i>	
Launcher	145
<i>An eleemosynary needs...</i>	
Symbiotic	163
<i>An empire's sword is laid...</i>	
For Want of a Nail...	181
<i>An epithet carries...</i>	
Implications	63
<i>An error in thought...</i>	
Basic Algebra	171
<i>And as the saying goes...</i>	
Stop Not...	97

<i>Ante-jentacular rumblings...</i>	
A Full Meal	133
<i>Arguments of reason are...</i>	
Failing History	151
<i>Art recalls life...</i>	
Correspondence	138
<i>Articulation leads...</i>	
Spoken Word	175
<i>Ascending lust...</i>	
Natural Course	190
<i>Ask dead-beats to file...</i>	
Elegant Dismissal	90
<i>Ask not of the windmills...</i>	
Dharma	4
<i>At every step...</i>	
Gandhian	44
<i>Be not a beggar...</i>	
A Basic Ask...	151
<i>Behind every boast is...</i>	
Finger-Wagging	146
<i>Better a Doyen of Deeds...</i>	
Action!	62
<i>Beware a hammer's friendship...</i>	
Fleeting	167
<i>Beware of bonsai...</i>	
Stature	161
<i>Beware the Hindu punditry...</i>	
Smoke & Mirror	83

<i>Beware the man of artful hands...</i>	
Charlatan	124
<i>Beware the third edge...</i>	
Betrayal	66
<i>Bitter is the backwash of...</i>	
After-taste	32
<i>Bitter is the convention...</i>	
Upheaval	19
<i>Bitter tongue breeds...</i>	
Caustic	76
<i>Blessed are the sensitivities...</i>	
Fearsome	82
<i>Blessed is the doctor...</i>	
King	21
<i>Blessed is the leaking pot...</i>	
Dispersal	39
<i>Blind fools chase mermaids...</i>	
Double Nothing	114
<i>Boast not of a catapult...</i>	
Ammunition	35
<i>Boasts immunity to feminine...</i>	
Know-Nothing	185
<i>Borrowed currency of thought...</i>	
Second-Hand Value	69
<i>Brandish not the Bible...</i>	
Throw the Book At...	12
<i>Bringers of honey...</i>	
Rosy Thorn	28

<i>Chaos fertile...</i>	
Disturb It!	64
<i>Cheap are the coins of gold...</i>	
Counterfeit	155
<i>Cheap are the words of...</i>	
Perhaps	166
<i>Cheap is the perfume...</i>	
Undeserved	79
<i>Cheapliness is next...</i>	
Naturally	136
<i>Confusion bleeds the heart...</i>	
Chaotic	122
<i>Crimson are the ants of...</i>	
Unfolding	141
<i>Dark arts paint...</i>	
Deviant	25
<i>Dark is the heart of a chess...</i>	
Off-Diagonal	99
<i>Dear is the perfume...</i>	
Extracted	165
<i>Death is a die...</i>	
Number's Up	100
<i>Don not a glittering armor...</i>	
Braggadocio	169
<i>Draw not too fast...</i>	
Stop for the Roses	79
<i>Drink your solace...</i>	
Just a Swig	33

<i>Easy are the dreams of...</i> Serenity	164
<i>Easy is the conscience garbed...</i> Reposed	144
<i>Either 'I' go or Ego.</i> Incompatible	108
<i>Embroider a weave of silk...</i> Prettify	70
<i>Errors of parts, error of whole.</i> Stepwise	55
<i>Even Buddha needs a nudge...</i> Dozing	137
<i>Even in benevolence, the gods...</i> Exalted Perch	30
<i>Even kings are lost...</i> Jumbled	58
<i>Every history is a prophecy.</i> Repetition	23
<i>Every native wants to...</i> Too Many Chiefs	75
<i>Every road to paradise passes...</i> The way of mortal life	148
<i>Faith it is to dive into a pool...</i> Blindly	117
<i>Fame snatches with true bite...</i> Snap-Back	126
<i>Fatigue not your labors...</i> Loaded	63

<i>Favors demand your virtue.</i>	
Barter	191
<i>Few can hear the sound of truth.</i>	
Ears	26
<i>Fire remains a blacksmith's...</i>	
Of course...	160
<i>Fleeting pleasures raise...</i>	
Cursed	184
<i>For the dullard, the stars...</i>	
Shortfall	147
<i>Forgive there where forgiving...</i>	
Not Easy	96
<i>Genius and Stupidity drink</i>	
And Yet...	104
<i>Geography is shaped by...</i>	
Topography	42
<i>Golden honey for bitter tongues.</i>	
Salve	45
<i>Good ideas die at the gallows...</i>	
Fated	145
<i>Grace and elegance are not found..</i>	
Priceless	76
<i>Grief multiplies in solitude.</i>	
Pull-up	192
<i>Half correct is not half bad!</i>	
Try	45
<i>Hath ever a frog churned...</i>	
Aimless	59

<i>He who battles with flawed...</i> Underarmed	54
<i>He who lies lies not alone...</i> Common Company	62
<i>He with the flamboyance of a...</i> Tragedy	165
<i>Heels over head heal...</i> Cure	101
<i>Hold your peace in a box locked.</i> Protect It!	128
<i>How one strives to write fuller...</i> Incomplete	114
<i>Hubris grabs you by the tail...</i> Self-Clutched	71
<i>In a Church of Fools,...</i> Surrendered	85
<i>In a fishery he demands falafel...</i> Incongruities	187
<i>In a war of giants,...</i> Overlooked	102
<i>In dark do people read...</i> Misinterpretations	56
<i>In dark times do ears and eyes...</i> Untrusted	31
<i>In doubtful state, hyphen-ate!</i> Umm-Maybe	172
<i>In forbidding cliffs,...</i> Adapt	21

<i>In scarlet wheel-barrows...</i>	
By the Bucketload	125
<i>In the fiddle of love tangles...</i>	
Tuned-in	188
<i>In the land of many masters...</i>	
Rudderless	78
<i>In the land of seven tongues...</i>	
Taste It	186
<i>In war we revel, in peace shrivel.</i>	
Human Tragedy	112
<i>Insolence walks around...</i>	
Defiant	191
<i>It does not suffice for thirst...</i>	
Unsated	86
<i>It is for the crowds to egg on...</i>	
Domains	160
<i>It suffices to see your reflection...</i>	
Inward	117
<i>Knots of sand crumble...</i>	
Delicate	55
<i>Know your Friday's from...</i>	
Awareness	16
<i>Lazy hands maroon the skiff.</i>	
Work	123
<i>Learned is the man...</i>	
Wisdom	71
<i>Little men swimming in...</i>	
Fishlets	166

<i>Live not inside a paper submarine.</i>	
Raw Material	193
<i>Logic overcomes not an enmity</i>	
If Only...	70
<i>Long leaps of faith fall...</i>	
Blind	118
<i>Loud is the pretense of...</i>	
Ersatz	68
<i>Low are the ceilings of...</i>	
Looks	60
<i>Man's desire does not sate...</i>	
Endless	38
<i>Many are the colonels of a...</i>	
Papyrus Tigers	15
<i>Meandering promises malingering.</i>	
Excuses	40
<i>'Meditate a thousand steps...</i>	
Contemplate	108
<i>'Men of varied tongues grow...</i>	
Discordant	149
<i>Money from Arrogance brings...</i>	
Enslaved	129
<i>To More precious than the...</i>	
Rare	182
<i>Moses was mistaken in those...</i>	
Broken	154
<i>Nature grieves in lasting...</i>	
Continual	146

<i>Never is a dagger's blade...</i>	
Hidden	74
<i>Never trust a three-legged chair</i>	
Toppler	58
<i>Night in passion or tears,...</i>	
Emergence	118
<i>Obsequiousness is a book with...</i>	
Hollowed	174
<i>Of ash is the comfort given by...</i>	
Solace	102
<i>Of what use the light in a coffin...</i>	
Rectify	67
<i>On a crooked chessboard...</i>	
Anarchy	140
<i>On easy sands do principles shift...</i>	
Foundation	127
<i>On lands littered with thorns,...</i>	
Sweep Aside	1
<i>One cannot become a pundit by...</i>	
In Lieu Of...	115
<i>One does not dance on the grave...</i>	
Wait!	180
<i>Only a fool cares to drain...</i>	
Audacity	44
<i>Pagan thoughts, virtuous minds.</i>	
Mentality	59
<i>Paint not the sacred in darkness.</i>	
Luminal	159

<i>Pale philosophies wither on...</i>	
Darwinian	183
<i>Pinched is the neck of the nectar...</i>	
Wrong Spirit	130
<i>Plumb your needs with measured...</i>	
Contentment	184
<i>Poisoned is the tongue of the...</i>	
Slippery	9
<i>Potatoes are practitioners...</i>	
Couching Potato...	156
<i>Poverty wails when wealth...</i>	
Charity	105
<i>Precious are the pearls born...</i>	
Painstaking	120
<i>Precious is the counsel of the dead.</i>	
If Available...	167
<i>Pride strikes with silent vigor...</i>	
Enemy Within	183
<i>Promises made, betrayals earned.</i>	
Ipsa Facto	46
<i>Promises of haste curl up...</i>	
Fast Bait	113
<i>Pugilism is an art utterly...</i>	
Adversary	103
<i>Quarrelsome turns the day...</i>	
Irritants	157
<i>Rare is the fool who asks for...</i>	
Self-sabotage	188

<i>Reality, in one stroke, strikes.</i> Unannounced	54
<i>Reason departs from passion too...</i> Bridled	78
<i>Repentance is the sewing needle...</i> Healer	176
<i>Ride drunken on a swaying...</i> Such in Life!	95
<i>Roars as a lion, hops as a lamb.</i> Adaptation	65
<i>Royalty does not do nuance.</i> Hauteur	14
<i>Rumors beget their own truths.</i> Engendre	138
<i>Rumors rise from mole-hills.</i> Mountainous	175
<i>Sacred is the drop of mercy...</i> Hold That Thought	170
<i>Sacred is the last drop of wine.</i> Grapevine	33
<i>Saddle not a barbarian with...</i> Asks Patience	40
<i>Scratch not Aladdin's lamp...</i> Ask Not!	128
<i>Sell for a straw the proof...</i> Standards	134
<i>Separate the men of mast</i> Adventure	181

<i>She who carries her heaven...</i>	
Honey Bee	98
<i>Shepherds of cold winds spread...</i>	
Occupational Hazard	126
<i>Sly slant to thoughts...</i>	
Seepage	81
<i>Soft in tongue, swift in hand</i>	
In Shaolin	48
<i>Solutions rushed are problems..</i>	
A Problem	152
<i>Sometimes your shirt is louder..</i>	
All Talk...	32
<i>Spicy is the soup cooked...</i>	
Tenth Commandment	135
<i>Stagnant ideas swim in...</i>	
Bogged	150
<i>Stand tall, if alone.</i>	
A Personal Credo	56
<i>Strive not for a name like...</i>	
Tell Yourself	113
<i>Stubborn argument, endless...</i>	
Non-stop	92
<i>Sugarcane may be sweet but...</i>	
Control	74
<i>Sunk in waters three...</i>	
Waterlogged	150
<i>Swallow the poison of eternal life...</i>	
Mislabeled	192

<i>Swaying joy in a swirling goblet,...</i>	
As Needed	8
<i>Sweeping vision, minor...</i>	
Give-up	34
<i>Sweet tongues hide betraying eyes.</i>	
Sub Rosa	173
<i>Swift is the passage of time for...</i>	
Relativity	142
<i>Take what you can get before...</i>	
Opportunity	144
<i>Tall words, blank dreams,...</i>	
Boasting	89
<i>Temper tempteth you..</i>	
Fire	147
<i>Test not the tempered steel...</i>	
Dangerous	7
<i>Thankless is the task of...</i>	
Ever and Anon	112
<i>The ancestors erred not in...</i>	
Repeated	61
<i>The ball of fortune rolls to a...</i>	
Sing It!	107
<i>The best defense against sarcasm...</i>	
Advice	20
<i>The Bible is missing a psalm...</i>	
Falling Short	2
<i>The blade of the crooked...</i>	
Grinning	178

<i>The blades of romance cut...</i>	
As They Should	141
<i>The blessed psalm heralds...</i>	
Following	110
<i>The boundaries of hell...</i>	
Entrance	2
<i>The chasm of avarice...</i>	
Consumed	115
<i>The common man has...</i>	
Lightweight	174
<i>The crescendo rises...</i>	
Observe	1
<i>The Door of Truth in...</i>	
Free Speech	131
<i>The empire of rust...</i>	
Feral	5
<i>The equator of waist...</i>	
Diet	36
<i>The forces of marketing...</i>	
Luxury Handbags	170
<i>The hinges of hubris...</i>	
Corrosive	13
<i>The impulse of a moment...</i>	
After-Effects	87
<i>The ink of victory...</i>	
Revision	22
<i>The intoxication of first...</i>	
Haze	80

<i>The logic of religion sells...</i>	
Worthless	101
<i>The melting wax flows...</i>	
Clinging	185
<i>The mind blushes when...</i>	
Risque	109
<i>The mind grieves...</i>	
Together	140
<i>The mirror of trust...</i>	
Fragile	77
<i>The molasses of bureaucrats...</i>	
Red Tape	153
<i>The moral rhumb-line...</i>	
Credo's Geometry	94
<i>The open door...</i>	
Step-In!	41
<i>The past dissolves...</i>	
Forgotten	180
<i>The pen which rebels...</i>	
Defy	122
<i>The Pope appears...</i>	
Theologic	10
<i>The road to Purgatory...</i>	
Menu	116
<i>The scales of compassion...</i>	
Overwhelmed	164
<i>The spoils of victory...</i>	
Short-Term	190

<i>The spoils of victory...</i>	
Short-Term	190
<i>The sword transcends..</i>	
History Lesson	57
<i>The tattered walls of a hut ...</i>	
Dignified Grace	23
<i>The thatched roof...</i>	
Protector	103
<i>The ugly duckling...</i>	
But Tall!	61
<i>The unbalanced scale...</i>	
Implicit	4
<i>The wet in thought...</i>	
Semi-deaf	121
<i>The worthy poison...</i>	
Mettle	179
<i>Those who live...</i>	
Release	47
<i>Time paints itself grey...</i>	
Aged Again	26
<i>Towering reputations...</i>	
Often...	41
<i>Tread lightly in...</i>	
Sinking	36
<i>Truth dances on ...</i>	
Euphoric	52
<i>Truth is just a small...</i>	
A Truth	20

<i>Unbanked rivers of grief ...</i>	
Provenance	3
<i>Unused wisdom...</i>	
Wasted	31
<i>Uphill he falls...</i>	
Say What?	106
<i>Utterly useless..</i>	
With Pointed Look	11
<i>Virtue departs...</i>	
Immutable	143
<i>Virtue is cheap..</i>	
Easy Choices	121
<i>Vote for a woman...</i>	
Always	171
<i>Wandering virtues roam...</i>	
Surfing	87
<i>Waste it is of good...</i>	
Said the Oenophile	142
<i>When destiny becomes...</i>	
Power	3
<i>When no one looks...</i>	
Watched Pot	119
<i>When passion mounts...</i>	
In Heat	37
<i>When the fever takes hold...</i>	
Dervish Dance	18
<i>When the seeds of conspiracy...</i>	
Eaten Away	93

<i>When the spirit's unwilling...</i>	
Err-Uctance	88
<i>Who has ever taken away...</i>	
Blazing	38
<i>Wisdom is a miser...</i>	
So to Speak	17
<i>Wise men are lost...</i>	
Contrast	132
<i>Wish your well-wishers ...</i>	
Return Gift	139
<i>Words are not heard...</i>	
Clashing	53
<i>Work on laughter...</i>	
Linguistic Life	116
<i>Wrong in the ask...</i>	
Apropos	111

“Proverbia” is a place of subtle allusions and whispers. It echoes with voices from lived and un-lived experiences, telling us about prevalent aphorisms and simple admonishments. Proverbia’s voices are rumors of life which one feels one has heard before but whose provenance is amorphous. There is a certain cadence to these thoughts, a gentle insistence to not be ignored, just like Echo’s pleas to Narcissus. Heeded, they may save you a stumbling of the toe at moments judicious (though there is no guarantee against human foibles and forgetfulness.) These thoughts are fleeting signposts, short reminders on our road-trip to watch our velocity, the stray cattle wandering in our path, and the minor nails on the asphalt... Many sages and thinkers and students of nature’s affairs have, over thousands of years, filled Proverbia’s granary of wisdom with pithy words, its libraries overflowing with a million saws and adages in a thousand dialects. The few striving words in here, these “shortlets”, are but a drop from that ocean...



“ *The road never speaks
to one without wise ears.* ”



Poetry



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